A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, October 13. 1709.

THO' this *Review* be a very entire Digreſſion from the Subject I am upon, yet I cannot diſpenſe with my entring upon a Subject ſo neceſſary, eſpecially at this time; as to the Manner, whether it ſhall pleaſe or diſpleaſe, is a-like to me—— I do not pretend to be famous for my Concern at pleaſing you—— If I can ſerve you, it will do every way as well.

The Subject I am going upon, and which perhaps I ſhall handle in a Way different from your Expectation, is

THE DEARNESS OF CORN.

You are miſtaken, if you expect me to ſay much, in order to reduce the Price of Corn in general; on the contrary I ſhall undertake to prove, that it is the Intereſt and very great Advantage of this Nation to have Corn dear.

But in order to ſet you right in this Paradox, and to diſtinguiſh between Dear and Cheap, and between the particular Circumſtances of Dearneſs and Cheapneſs; I muſt lay down a few Poſitions as to the raiſing the Price of Corn—And in this I muſt be very plain.

1. Dearneſs of Corn is an Advantage to the General Stock, and what we ought to deſire, and be very well pleas'd with.

2. Cheapneſs

2. Cheapneſs of Corn is the greateſt publick Miſchief that can befall us—— Speaking as to the Loſs or Gain of the Nation.

Theſe are the two Fundamentals; I am to take my Argument from *Dearneſs*; I muſt diſtinguiſh between DEARNESS and SCARCITY; and firſt, in order to explain the Term *Scarcity*; it is to be underſtood, *a Scarcity* at the Market, or *a Scarcity* in the Store.

I ſhall no where give Reaſon for any Body to conceive ſo groſsly of me, as to imagine I ſhould ſay, that *Scarcity*, in either of theſe Reſpects, ſhould be our Advantage—— *Scarcity* in Store is properly DEARTH, and is a Judgment upon a Nation, *let it happen when, how, or from what Cauſe it will*; this contains meer Want of Quaintity produc'd, and is a Famine in Degree—— And of this, bleſſed be GOD, we need not ſpeak.

Scarcity in the Market is generally occaſion'd by Clandeſtine Trade, ſuch as we call Engroſſing, Foreſtalling, and Withholding—— And theſe Things it is the Buſineſs of the Magiſtrates to correct, nor are the Methods of regulating theſe Things difficult; ſo I ſhall not take up any of your Time to ſpeak about them.

But before I go on to ſtate the Caſe between the Dearneſs or Cheapneſs of Corn, give me leave to make one general Obſervation at this Time—I ſhall do it the more poſitively, and with the greater Confidence, becauſe I have been an Eye-Witneſs, and a careful Obſerver of the Fact, in the moſt proper Places for that Purpoſe. —And my Obſervation is this,

That there is in *England* at [illegible]ime, NO SCARCITY AT ALL [illegible] CORN.

I ſhall farther explain my G[illegible]neral, and I undertake to tell you all up[illegible]ery good Enquiry and Perſonal Obſe[illegible] (1.) That there has, generally ſp[illegible]ng [illegible]een a very good Crop of Corn throughout *England* this Year; (2.) That there is at this Time in *Britain* Corn enough to ſupply the whole Iſland for very near three Years to come—— This I ſhall make clearer afterward.

It would be very little to the Purpoſe, to give the World an Account of the Perambulations I have taken thro' *Britain*, ſince the Beginning of *Auguſt*: But it is ſo much to the Purpoſe, that it may let the Reader underſtand, that there is ſome Truth in what I am going to ſay, and that it may be reaſonable to allow me capable of judging. You may underſtand then, that I have paſs'd, ſince the Beginning of *Auguſt*, thro' the *North*, *North-Eaſt*, and Part of the *Weſt* of *Britain*, for near 400 Miles in Length; in this Journey I have ſtrictly obſerv'd of my ſelf, and have farther diſcour'd with the Perſons concern'd, and enquir'd into the Nature, the Quality, and the Circumſtances of the Market for Corn, and find the Country People eaſie and ſatisfy'd, and, *which is but rarely ſo*, very thankful with what they have now in View—That every where their Corn is good, in ſome Places their Crop really great, and forward enough.

It has indeed been generally late, the Harveſt has been backward, of which Circumſtance I know not whether we may ſay, it is better or worſe, neither is it concern'd in our Debate, any farther, than as it may hazard the Well-getting in the Corn for Want of fair Weather—— But even this is anſwer'd by the happy Seaſon, which it has pleas'd God to bleſs us with in the *North* of *England*, and in *North-Britain*, where the Month of *September* has been, generally ſpeaking, very fair, and the Weather good—And from an Obſervation of the moſt experienc'd People in *Scotland* in one Caſe, (*viz.*) That they have generally better Weather there in *October*, than in *September*.

But to return to my travelling Obſervations; I went out of *London* juſt as the Harveſt was beginning in *Hartfordſhire*; here I obſerv'd the *Oates* and *Barley* very good, but the *Wheat* not ſo good, and indeed the meaneſt I ſaw in the *South* of *England*; and backward—And this being ſo near *London*, I doubt not has fill'd the Mouths of our Meal-men with the Noiſe of *Scarcity*, and encourag'd the Husbandmen to lay by their Corn for a Market, *as they call it*—— I was no ſooner come into *Bedford-*

Bedfordſhire, an open Corn Country, but the Caſe was viſibly alter'd; the Corn was good, the Crop very well, and enquiring of the Country People, they all agreed, there was, tho' not the greateſt Crop they ever had, yet a very good Crop, and the Corn in good very Condition; turning then on the Right hand from near *Bedford* into *Cambridgſhire* and *Huntingdonſhire*, the Corn was not only very good, and the Crop great, but much forwarder than nearer *London*; for their Barley and Wheat was almoſt down, much of it carry'd in, and in many Places the Plough was in the Ground again; this was about the 17th of *Auguſt*, from this paſſing the *Ouſe* at St. *Neots*, I croſs'd *Huntingdon* and *Northamptonſhires*, Part of two Counties, almoſt all Corn, and eſpecially that Part of it which I paſs'd thro', (*viz.*) from St. *Neots* to *Kimbolton*, *Thrapſton*, and *Rockingham*, which Part of the Country is not only a Granary to the Sea, having the Navigation of the River *Ouſe* down to *Lynn*— But a Granary to *London*, all their Wheat being carry'd away to *Hempſtead*, St. *Albans*, and ſuch other Markets which ſupply *London*, and their Barley to *Ware* and *Hartford*, to come down in Malt to *London*.

I can freely appeal to the honeſt People of theſe Countries, whether the exceſſive Price of Corn be not a perfect Myſtery to them, and whether for 30 Miles every way, taking *Northamptonſhire* for the Center, they have ever had one Year with another a better Crop of Corn? —— No doubt, but the Farmers in theſe Countries are very glad of the raiſing the Price; and if you will keep up the Price, they will grow rich almoſt in one Year.

But to proceed; from *Rockingham*, I enter'd *Leiceſterſhire*, the *North* Side of which, and the *South* Sides of *Darby* and *Nottinghamſhire*, being a Tract of 25 Miles broad, and 40 Miles long, is wholly given up to Corn, and is ſome of the richeſt Ground in *Britain*—From *Rockingham* to *Mount-Sorrel*, 14 Miles, from thence to *Nottingham* 16 Miles, from thence to *Darby* 12 Miles; let any Man confute me if he can, there has not been a better Crop of Corn one time with another theſe 100 Years paſt—The Ear full, the Colour bright, and the Seaſon for Harveſt very kindly; and this was about the 22d of *Auguſt*, when all Hands were at Work upon their Harveſt, joyful and thankful for the Proſpect of Plenty. It muſt be ſurprizing to theſe People to hear of Wheat in *London*, 10 and 12 *s. per Buſhel* —— And tho' the poor manufacturing and labouring People will ſuffer by it, the Farmers no doubt will triumph—and hurry their Corn down the *Trent* to *Gainsborough* and *Hull*, and from thence to *London* by Sea. But to proceed;

From this Place thro' the Peak of *Darby*, and a long Tract of barren Mountains, much Corn was not to be expected, and that there was, would be green and backward, and ſo it was—but not at all more ſo than uſual, nor the Crop worſe; and even in *Darbyſhire*, as ſoon as the Country can bear Corn, as about *Cheſterfield*, and all *Scarſdale*, full of Corn in good Caſe, forward as the Place us'd to be, and a hopeful Crop in View.

At our Entrance into *Yorkſhire* for 20 Miles, we found the Corn backward, and but mean; and this Place was the firſt we could ſay there was a poor Crop in, but it held but a little while; for farther *North* the Corn was very good again, beginning 10 Miles *South* of *Pontefract*, and holding on to the Biſhoprick of *Durham*.

About *New-Caſtle*, *Durham*, and the *South* Parts of *Northumberland*, the Quantity of Corn ſown is not great, and the River of *Tyne* is their beſt Magazine at *New-Caſtle*, which ſupplies them from other Parts—— But when we came on the *North* Parts of *Northumberland*, even to the Border, and into *Scotland* along the *Tweed*, there has not been a better Crop, or a better Harveſt for many Years paſt; particularly from *Morpeth*, *Aulnwick*, *&c.* to *Woller*, and into *Scotland* by *Cheviot* Hills, and *Kelſoe*.

In *Scotland*—It is ſtrangely myſterious to the poor People to ſee every where a great Crop—— In the Northmoſt Parts, particularly the beſt and forward, as in *England*; Above 150 Miles *North* of *Edingburgh*, the Corn was this Year as forward as in *Hartfordſhire*, and as good a Crop as has been in the

the Memory of Man—— This is a strange Novelty,

DEARTH and PLENTY.

Whence it proceeds, is farther to be enquir'd; and perhaps in the Enquiry something may be seen to lead us all to a Remedy.

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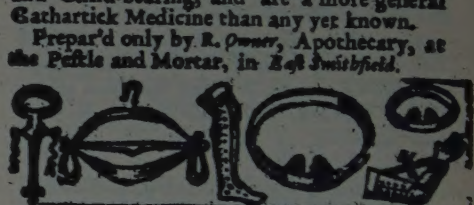

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